

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

PG:

Survey No. 66-37-41

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

Maryland Historic Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic The Forbes House

and/or common The Lustron House

2. Location

Street & number: 4811 Harvard Road ☒ not for publication

City, town: The City of College Park ☐ vicinity of 5th Cong. District

State: Maryland County Prince George's County

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing address of all owners)

Name: Jack Robeson

Street & number Telephone no: 301-809-2222

City, town State & zip code: Maryland

5. Location of Legal Description

Courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Liber

Street & number folio

City, town State

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

Title: *Old Town College Park: A Survey*

Date: ca. 1970s-1980s ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ local

Depository for survey records: Prince George's County Planning Department

City, town: Upper Marlborough State: Maryland

7. Description

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Condition		Check One	Check One	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

The 4811 Harvard Road house, known as the Lustron House, is a one-story ranch-like style house that has exterior and interior enameled-steel walls. The exterior steel walls are painted with a pale green color and the trim surrounding the windows and doors is painted white. The front door is located behind a recessed open-air porch. The Harvard Road Lustron house has two bedrooms, a bathroom, a kitchen, a small dining area, and a living room. After walking through the front door, one enters the kitchen and utility area. The interior doors are enameled-steel sliding pocket doors. If facing the house from its front-door side, one window stands to the left of the door. Three windows line the left side of the house, while two windows line all other sides of the house. There is ample built-in closet and shelf space throughout the house.

No structural changes has been made to the Lustron house.

As I was not permitted access into the 4811 Harvard Road Lustron house, I thus attached a general floor plan, which many of the two-bedroom Lustron homes followed, to the end of this survey.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance – Check and justify below				
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology– prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology – historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/ government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

Specific dates:

Builder/Architect:

Check:

Applicable Criteria:

☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Applicable Exception:

☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance:

☒ National

☐ State

☐ Local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The 4811 Harvard Road Lustron house was built in 1947 or 1948, and its current owner, named Jack Robeson, moved into the house in 1979. Although he does not inhabit the house today, Mr. Robeson lived in the house for approximately ten years. Before the house was built, the lot was owned by Margaret Eddy of 4809 Harvard Road. Mrs. Eddy sold the lot to Mr. Forbes who thereafter contracted the building of the Lustron house on his new lot. Aphelia Hammond bought the Lustron house from Mr. Forbes some years later, and eventually sold the Lustron house to Jack Robeson.

Between 1946 and 1950 Carl Gunnar Strandlund's Lustron Corporation erected 2,492 mass-produced houses with exterior and interior porcelain enamel-finished steel. Strandlund's assembly-line Lustron houses were originally designed to ease the post-World War Two housing shortage. More specifically, according to Robert Mitchell, "The elements of the Lustron house included light-gauge steel wall framing that supported light-gauge steel roof trusses, which spanned the exterior walls." (p. 48) As a Lustron house, the 4811 Harvard Road house maintains great significance as a technological innovation, as a cultural innovation, and as part of the evolution of house building in the United States. As a ranch-style home, the Lustron house and other ranch houses in the United States are "loosely based on early Spanish Colonial precedents of the American southwest, modified by influences borrowed from Craftsman and Prairie modernism of the early 20th century," state Virginia and Lee McAlester. (p. 479) In sum, the Lustron house located at 4811 Harvard Road is significant for a variety of reasons, including: its uniqueness within the Calvert Hills community; its unusual building materials; its innovative assembly-line production process; and its contribution to the evolution of American house building.

In regard to its integrity, the 4811 Harvard Road Lustron house certainly maintains its integrity since no structural changes have been made to the house. Moreover, because of its building materials, the Lustron house has suffered little interior or exterior damage overtime.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Survey No. ^{PC:} 66-37-41

Mitchell, Robert. "What Ever Happened to Lustron Homes?" *The Association for Preservation Technology Bulletin*. Vol. XIII. New York: Association for Preservation Technology, November 2, 1991.
Keister, Kim. "Showing Its Metal." *Historic Preservation*. Vol. 47. Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, January-February 1995.
McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.
Brooke Orr's phone interviews with Jack Robeson, March 1998.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle Scale _____

Quadrangle Scale _____

UTM References: (do not complete UTM references)

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

State	Code	County	Code
State	Code	County	Code

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Brooke Orr, Graduate Student at the George Washington University

Organization: GWU's Historic Preservation Class, History 278

Date: 3-2-98

Street & Number: 1921 Kalorama Road, N.W.

Telephone: 202-319-3156

City/Town: Washington, D.C.

State: DC

The Maryland Historical Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights

Return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, MD
21401
(301) 269-2438

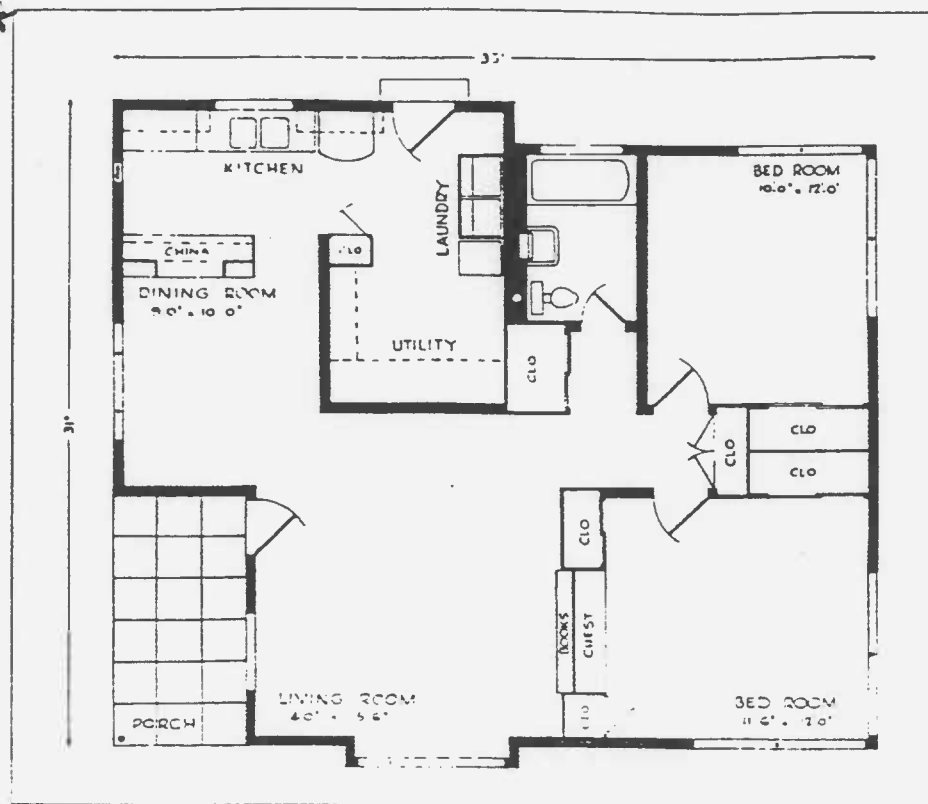


Fig. 11. Floor plan of two-bedroom model as designed by Blass & Beckman. The rear wall log was omitted in the production model.

poorly compacted fill, or perimeter footings lacked adequate depth to resist frost heaving. These displacements affect the partitions, in some cases causing jammed doors and cabinets and, depending on severity, may require repairs. At this writing the only known floor-corrective measure is at Quantico, where floor tiles were removed and a feathered grout patch was trowelled around the perimeter where the slab had settled up to three-quarters of an inch.

Cleaning. Most occupants delight in the ease of cleaning both the interior and exterior which, beyond ordinary dusting, generally requires only soap, water, and a cloth or sponge. One owner marvelled at the ease with which soot was removed after an oil-burner malfunction. Exterior rust stains, according to another owner, are readily removed with automotive chrome polish.

User acceptance. Most Lustron owners like their houses very much.²¹ One house in North Dakota is still occupied by the original owner. Five others have been occupied by the same owners for more than thirty years. At least two-thirds of the other North Dakota owners have lived in their Lustrons for ten years or more. Instead of repainting, one long-term owner has periodically replaced furniture. A few owners complained that they were not able to heat their houses adequately using the radiant system, and have replaced furnaces and installed hot water baseboard heat. Another installed an electric duct furnace in the ceiling plenum.

Conclusion

Lustron houses represent a significant development in the evolution of man's most basic building need,

shelter for living. The houses physically present challenges and opportunities in the field of preservation. Due to their materials and structural characteristics, they have suffered little from the more usual forces of building attrition. They do, however, have unique vulnerabilities which have become apparent in recent years and are correctable, generally with little difficulty. The potential for beneficial corrections can be aided by further investigation and testing of various assembly elements, dissemination of recommendations for corrective materials and methods, and making the necessary assembly drawings available to owners on a systematic basis.

With these considerations in mind, I am currently preparing a historical context statement for nomination of Lustron Houses to the National Register of Historic Places.

It has been suggested that a Lustron Homeowners' Association be formed for the exchange of information, and I would welcome inquiries and comments about such an organization. At least two nationwide Lustron inventories are in progress. Interested parties may contact Thomas T. Feters, 545 South Elizabeth Drive, Lombard, Illinois 60148, and/or the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, 1985 Velma Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43211.

The State Historical Society of North Dakota has been the fortunate recipient of a 165-page Lustron Westchester Deluxe Model 02 Erection Manual, donated by Harold and Verna Travis of Fargo, North Dakota. It has been reproduced on a four-card set of 24X reduction microfiche which, with a four-page index, is available post-paid for \$5.00. Checks should be made payable to the State Historical Society of North Dakota and mailed to State Historical Society of North Dakota, 612 East Boulevard, Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0830.

Mitchell, Robert. "What Ever Happened to Lustron Homes?" ^{PG#} 66-37-41
The Association for Preservation Technology Bulletin. Vol. XXIII.
New York: Association for Preservation Technology,
November 2, 1991.

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